**Minutes of the Garve & District Community Council special meeting**

**held on Wednesday 30 August 2023 via webcam**

**Community Council members present on webcam:** Kenny Maclean (Chairman & Secretary), Bob Moir (Vice Chairman), Caroline Gamble (Treasurer), Joe Stewart and Sadie-Michaela Harris.

**Also present on webcam**: Peter Kane (PR Consultant for the Kane Partnership), Scott Vallance (Principal Project Manager, Statkraft UK), Seumas Skinner (Community Liaison Manager, Statkraft UK) and ten members of the public (over the course of the meeting some members of the public either entered or left the meeting).

**Apologies**: Community Council member Jennifer Haslam and co-opted member Hamish Leslie Melville.  *(Post meeting note – apologies also received from Tina Hartley (Community Engagement and Development Officer, TG&DDC))*

**The Chairman opened the special meeting at 7.00pm**and welcomed everyone.  The Community Council members present unanimously agreed this special meeting be recorded for minute taking purposes and for those who cannot attend - <https://bit.ly/GDCC-30Aug23>  This is the first time our Chairman can recall a Community Council meeting being officially recorded.  Our Chairman went on to explain that he had called this special meeting under 1.2 of standing orders.  The last time he called such a meeting was in January 2016 to discuss plans for a Community Needs Survey.  He reminded members of the public that they were very welcome to attend Community Council meetings even on webcam and take part in the discussions under his guidance.

Our Chairman felt the meeting should begin by noting that the Community Council members were very sad to learn that our former colleague Lady Elizabeth Leslie Melville died peacefully at her home in Lochluichart on Sunday 13 August 2023 following a long but brave battle with illness.  Eliza had been a long-time serving member of this Community Council for around 30 years whose input and knowledge will be greatly missed.  Eliza was the beloved wife of Hamish, adored mother of Jake and Harry and grandmother of Rory, Honor and Luke.  Eliza was also, for many decades, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Ross & Cromarty.  Eliza’s funeral was private but there will be a service of thanksgiving and celebration of her life at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London on Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 11.00am and at the Church of Scotland, Strathpeffer on Monday 6 November 2023 at 11.00am.  Our thoughts are with her husband Hamish and the family at this sad time.  Our Chairman will make a fuller tribute to Eliza at our next ordinary meeting next week.

We send best wishes to Simon Friend, a Strathgarve resident who has been unwell.  Simon attended this meeting and thanked everyone for their good wishes.

**Declarations of Interest** - none.  Community Council members confirmed that they had read all documents due to be discussed tonight before the start of this meeting.

**Proposed Carn Fearna Windfarm** – Statkraft UK are at an early stage of a project that may see up to fourteen turbines built on Carn Fearna, above Strathgarve.  Representatives from the company attended this meeting to update the community on the project so far.  Further information can also be found at <https://projects.statkraft.co.uk/Carn-Fearna/>  Presentation slides used at this meeting will be available to view in the library section of the Community Council website. Scott Vallance (Principal Project Manager, Statkraft UK) and Seumas Skinner (Community Liaison Manager, Statkraft UK) are both based in Glasgow (Seumas resides in Conon Bridge).  Peter Kane (PR Consultant for the Kane Partnership) is communications and Statkraft UK also uses SLR consultants and who will attend public exhibitions in due course.  Statkraft UK is Europe’s largest power generator based in Norway, operating in around 21 countries around the world with several projects in the Highlands either consented or at the planning stage so the company brings expertise and knowledge to this proposed project.  This proposed project is looking at building up to fourteen turbines, up to 200 metres base to tip height.  On ground surveys have been underway since 2020.  The company are also looking at £5,000 per MW community benefit in line with Scottish Government guidance (around £400,000 per year) but are also looking at shared ownership, perhaps better broadband provision (following survey of current service available) and possibly business startup grants, other suggestions welcome.  Lot of design work to be considered, comments through the scoping process will help refine the design.  It is hoped a S36 planning application to The Scottish Government will be submitted around Autumn 2024.  There are currently twenty viewpoints listed for visual impact assessments but this could be added/changed as the project moves forward, a photographer is already in the area to start that work.  The photomontages will be based on fourteen turbines but that could change as the design evolves.  The company now has 24 months’ worth of bird surveys with robust data collected.  Pre-planning stage (now) can take 6-12 months including two public exhibitions in November 2023 and March 2024, venues tbc.  If all goes to plan, a planning application is then submitted and if approved, construction may start in 2028 for 12-18 months.  The site might be operational in 2029 for 40 years.  National Grid/SSEN agreement to connect into Corriemoillie substation in place, whether it is overground or underground cables tbc.  The public exhibitions will be advertised by post to properties around 10KM area of site, in the press, posters and on their website, other suggestions welcome.  The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will cover many aspects of the proposed project which will determine exactly how many turbines might be applied for.  Access to the site will be from the A835 at Silverbridge using existing tracks as much as possible.  Biodiversity is also key with two years of bird surveys already undertaken.  Further studies will be held.  Happy to work with other local wildlife organisations to help add more data.  A previous scheme on Carn Gorm was refused around 2014.  Since then technology of turbines has improved and policies such as The Paris Agreement (2016), UK Neto Zero Strategy (2023) and National Planning Framework 4 (2023) mean this proposed application will be considered against different policies.  Statkraft feel they are a high standard developer who are very willing to listen and work with the community, especially around community benefit, learn from past experiences, keeping the community informed, access for walkers etc …  Battery storage – exact design not selected yet but they tend to be self-contained containers with fire safety equipment installed.  e-Bike batteries are different to these storage batteries.  LCT have been contacted as the funding body for the area but have not met with them yet.

A Question-and-Answer session then followed …

Q – Achnasheen Village Hall as well as Garve Public Hall should be used for public exhibitions.

A - Noted.

Q - Pylons tend to follow blades, more details needed, photomontages are key.  Garve ring fenced by turbines as it is.  How do you connect to substation?

A - Connection to substation tbc but a S37 planning application will also be needed.

Q – 24 months wildlife survey.  Data available?  Who undertook?  See results?

A - Long standing consultancy private contractor worked on previous projects for Statkraft also worked on this proposed project.  Results will be shown at public exhibitions and part of the planning application. Avian ecology.

Q - Construction time?

A - Estimated to be 12-24 months.

Q - Battery storage - size/how many?

A – Depends, 45foot container, numbers tbc.

Q - Will there be noise?

A - Turbines do make noise, the EIA will investigate current background noise, using microphones and use technical data to establish the baseline now.  Then model using technical details supplied by the turbine supplier.  Guidelines will determine what is or is not possible.  The fourteen turbines might be reduced to address noise if necessary or moved within site.  Telecoms station noted and design will ensure it is not affected.

Q - Visuals would be welcome.

A - Photomontages will be at the public exhibition.

Q - Access via A835?

A - Silverbridge, then up past Silverbridge Lodge as things stand, tbc.

Q - Access tracks between turbines after construction?

A - Will be shown as part of photomontages.

Q - How long has the wildlife company been going?  Experience?  Qualifications?

A - Avian ecology are members of society; competent statements can be provided.  Set up in 2007 worked on both onshore and offshore projects.

Q - BEAR?  Police contacted?

A – No, but Transport Scotland has via scoping.  Police will be needed to escort abnormal loads.  Traffic survey is also part of a S36 application.

Q - RAF/MOD consulted?

A - MOD contacted via scoping.

Q - When does this all stop?  We seem to be getting ring fenced with turbines around Garve.

A - Respectfully disagree, as a nation through The Scottish Government ambition policy which is already in place but appreciate it is not just onshore, offshore, hydro needed too.  This site does have capability.

Q - All very interesting, we have heard all this before, it is early days yet, nothing is certain, will want finer details.

A - Noted.  The developer feels it is good to engage now, rather than come later when it could appear it is a done deal and everything is already agreed.

Q - We have been through this process already, clearly at an early stage.  Good to hear so early on.  Not sure we heard so much at the scoping stage before.  Development Company would like to be on contacts list/updates.

A - Possibly emailed before but will happily get in touch directly again.

Q - A Silverbridge resident has not been contacted – is it going ahead?

A – This is only the start of the process, happy to visit the household *(Post meeting note – the developer has responded to the household and a meeting is being arranged).*

Q - Property values in the area will go down.  Study done?  Compensation?

A - No study for this project, 2014 study showed no evidence -[www.climatexchange.org.uk/research/projects/impact-of-wind-farms-on-property-prices/](http://www.climatexchange.org.uk/research/projects/impact-of-wind-farms-on-property-prices/), not considering compensation.

Q - Tear up land for electricity.

A - Turbines will only be built if planning permission is granted.  Improving biodiversity is part of planning.

Q - Enhance the National Grid for others as we have enough electricity up here.

A - Matter of perspective – as a country trying to reduce carbon.  Cannot generally build in England and Scotland is windy.  Statkraft do not sell direct to households. *(Post meeting note - changes may be afoot in England –*[*https://news.sky.com/story/wednesdays-national-newspaper-front-pages-12427754?postid=6385396#liveblog-body*](https://news.sky.com/story/wednesdays-national-newspaper-front-pages-12427754?postid=6385396#liveblog-body)*)*

Q - Why not build in England/rest of UK?

A - Scottish Government targets need to be met and there has been a soft moratorium in England since 2015.

Q - Scotland generates enough to power itself already, so why more turbines?  We are surrounded here now.  More turbines means less wildlife, which cannot escape from them.  Hard to go back.

A - Noted.

Q - Agree with others.  Who gets the money?  Who gains?  Not the community!

A - Statkraft is based in Norway, but UK profits are reinvested such as hydrogen and hydro.  Less we rely on power stations using expensive gas and coal, the better for all, less need for price hikes.  Overall, profits are shared with owners, reinvestment and less bills.

Q - How does it go in our pockets?  Devalue our homes?  Do not mind turbines in the distance but not on my doorstep please.  They supply England.  How do we get turbines banned up here like England?  We need tourism such as NC500 and hillwalkers.

A - EIA looks at Tourism and impacts.  (Our Chairman suggested the individual writes to their MSP).

Q - Agree with others here.  Little Ben Wyvis is well used.  Walkers will be put off visiting the area.

A - Noted.

Q – In Norway, backlash against windfarms there.  Generating extra electricity is exported but revenue is higher than paying in the country, so local prices have gone up so everyone pays the same.

A - Some hydro schemes not available in Norway but will seek clarification.

Q – Put them offshore?

A – There are targets for both on and off shore in Scotland and the UK.  Mix of generators as the wind does not always blow when electricity is needed.  Onshore and solar are cheaper than offshore.  Scotland has a Scottish Government target of 20gig by 2030, as a nation, we are not half way there yet.

Q – How sustainable is the technology?

A – EIA carbon calculator looks at carbon payback.

Q – Turbines are a clean source but not enough infrastructure to cope so must be shut down to stop producing so why build more?

A – Broke ground today on another improvement to capacity, constraint payments were needed a few years ago but capacity is improving and further plans in the pipeline, working to remove such payments.  Other companies are also working to improve capacity/meet demand.  National grid overseas payments.

Q – Loss of power down the line?

A – Some voltage can be lost the further away from the source.  That is factored in when considering where to locate windfarms - <https://www.statkraft.co.uk/newsroom/2021/location-location-net-zero/>

Q – Construction materials won on site?

A – Won on site as much as possible such as rock.  EIA will determine.

Q – Who owns the land?  How much do they get paid?

A – Andrew Allan and Daphnie Grant.  Commercially sensitive regarding payment but a market rent is paid as is usually the case for lifetime of the project.

Our Chairman felt that the proposals at Tarvie for up to five turbines were worth mentioning at this meeting as both this proposed project and the proposals at Tarvie would be seen by Garve residents if either or both projects were granted planning permission.  He went on to read out his report from a meeting he recently attended …

*Although out with our area, on Tuesday 15 August 2023 our Chairman attended an online meeting alongside some Contin Community Council members to hear more about the****proposed Tarvie windfarm****with the developer.  The developer confirmed that the land in question at Tarvie is owned by several crofters who currently use it for grazing purposes.  The developer would lease the land from the crofters but grazing could continue once the turbines were in place.  The developer is looking at up to five turbines generating up to 6MW each with a base to tip max height of up to 200 metres.  "Up to" was mentioned several times as statutory bodies such as NatureScot may ask for reductions.  The developer also referred to "Carbon Clever 2025" which is a Highland Council policy -*[*https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1210/environment/321/climate\_change/2*](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1210/environment/321/climate_change/2)*The developer confirmed access onto the site from the A835 was being looked at and they had not been in contact with the proposed Carn Fearna developer as it was felt by some that both proposals will have a visual impact on the communities of Tarvie and Garve.  Traffic while transporting the turbines to the site was also raised as a concern, especially along the twisty A835 road up from Contin.  At this stage it was thought turbines would come into Inverness port rather than Invergordon port, the developer is in talks with BEAR about this.  Ullapool ferry traffic was also raised as a possible issue.  Community Benefit was touched on but it was noted it is not a planning consideration.  The up to five turbines would be located to the west of the site and concern was raised that the houses in Tarvie might still hear noise or suffer shadow flicker.  Impact assessments would confirm the likelihood of any issues and existing guidance would need to be met before planning would be granted.  The developer hopes to apply for planning permission in autumn 2025 once two years of bird surveys are in place with public exhibitions taking place in 2024 and 2025.  Our Chairman asked for an exhibition in Garve as well as in Contin and that they would be welcome to attend a future Garve & District Community Council meeting.  More details will be available on*[*tarviewindfarm.com*](http://tarviewindfarm.com/)*Our thanks to Norma Ross at Contin Community Council for inviting us to attend.*

Our Chairman then asked the Statkraft representatives for their views.  They confirmed they had now spoken to the other developer, an introduction call.  They were not against working together such as delivery routes but different timeframes involved, will meet again early October.  Happy to share data and feedback at the public exhibition.  Joint public exhibition?  If willing, will consider it but timescales might not work.

Q – Has a case officer at planning been assigned yet for Carn Fearna?

A – Not yet but it will be The Scottish Government who determines the application.

Q – How did you find this site above Strathgarve?

A – Statkraft found the site and then spoke to land owners as is the normal process.

Q – Can The Highland Council veto this application?

A – If The Highland Council do object, then public local inquiry, such as Carn Gorm which was refused.

Q – How many MW?

A – 114MW at this stage, subject to change.

Q – No planning application yet, once it is submitted, then the public can comment?

A – Yes, late summer 2024 is the target date to submit a planning application.

Q – Costs?  Cheaper on land but why half way up a hill?  Flat land would be easier?

A – Not just Highlands, windfarms are built across Scotland.  Several factors are considered.

Q – If we were in a National Park, this would not be allowed?

A – No, Cairngorms for instance do not allow turbines.

Q - No feeling for the natural beauty that will be lost?  No concerns?

A – This is an introductory meeting, no fixed plans, keen to open discussions with the community.  By the time of the public exhibition, we will know more about what might be possible.  Cannot comment for other areas.

Our Chairman hoped this was a meeting that was useful to all sides.  The Statkraft representatives thanked all those who attended and for their questions.  The Community Council meets monthly so updates would be appreciated and the Statkraft representatives were thanked for attending.

**AOB from Community Council members**– no issues raised by those present.

**AOB from members of the public** - no issues raised by those present.

**Date of next ordinary meeting**– Tuesday 5 September 2023, 7.00pm, webcam

The chairman thanked everyone, especially Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris for hosting and recording the webcam session and closed the special meeting at 9.00pm.

Signed ……………………………..

Signed ……………………………..

Date ……………………………….

[www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict](http://www.community-council.org.uk/garveanddistrict)

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